

Carolyn McCarthy

Health Care Accomplishments - 108th Congress

As a nurse, Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy has first hand experience with the health care system in the United States. She brings a unique and important perspective to Congress regarding the importance of making sure all people are safe and healthy. She is using her expertise to address the problems associated with today's healthcare system by sponsoring and cosponsoring important and necessary legislation.

LOWERING PRICES FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Congresswoman McCarthy aggressively supports protecting consumers from the soaring costs of prescription drug medications. Since seniors and those with chronic illnesses such as cancer, are the largest consumers of prescription drugs, McCarthy believes it is imperative that Congress address this issue in order to bring relief to these vulnerable populations. McCarthy introduced legislation that is a common sense approach at helping to reduce prescription drug prices.

HR828 The Pharmaceutical Fiscal Accountability Act would allow a brand name substitute, or generic drug, to come to the marketplace quicker thus increasing competition and driving down the price of all prescription drugs, for everyone. Under current law, a drug manufacturer is protected against competition by another company by having a patent on their product. These patents have an expiration date, but often large drug companies delay the expiration of the patent and with it, a generic, less expensive version of a drug being sold to consumers. When the patent does expire on a name brand drug, the first generic manufacturer who gets approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is awarded an 180-day "exclusivity period" on that drug. This exclusivity period does not begin until the generic company actually puts the drug on the market. Under the McCarthy proposal, the clock for the exclusivity period would begin ticking the day the FDA approves a generic drug application, giving a generic company 60 days to begin marketing. ***By changing the existing law, market competition would be increased and the high cost of prescription drugs would be lowered.***

Generic drugs play a roll in containing the cost of prescription drugs. The introduction of a generic version of a prescription drug as soon as a patent expires provides the consumer a viable option to the name brand drug at a substantially reduced price. Generic drugs often enter the market at 25 -

35% less than the name brand, and typically sell at 50% or less than the brand name version of the drug after a few years.

- ✓ **H.R.1400, Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act of 2003**, would provide for substantial reductions in the price of prescription drugs for Medicare beneficiaries.

ADDING A PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT TO MEDICARE

Prescription drug costs are skyrocketing, and Medicare's minimal coverage leaves much to be desired. Congresswoman McCarthy has cosponsored several bills that reform Medicare by adding a prescription drug benefit and ease the financial burden of prescription drug costs.

- ✓ **H.R.1568 , Medicare Rx Now Act of 2003**, would amend part B of title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for a prescription drug benefit with a high deductible at no additional premium and access to discount prices on drugs and to provide for the operation of such benefit without a deductible for certain low-income Medicare beneficiaries.
- ✓ **H.R.3672**, would amend part D (Voluntary Prescription Drug Benefit Program) of title XVIII (Medicare) of the Social Security Act, as added by the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003, to give the Secretary of Health and Human Services the authority similar to that of other Federal entities that purchase prescription drugs in bulk to negotiate contracts with manufacturers of covered part D drugs, consistent with the requirements and in furtherance of the goals of providing quality care and containing costs.
- ✓ **H.R.1288, Access to Cancer Therapies Act of 2003**, would provide coverage under the Medicare Program for all oral anticancer drugs.

IMPROVING MEDICARE

- ✓ **H.R.792 , Medicare Patient Access to Physical Therapists Act of 2003**, would authorize physical therapists to evaluate and treat Medicare beneficiaries without a requirement for a physician referral, and for other purposes.
- ✓ **H.R.745, Safe Nursing and Patient Care Act of 2003**, would provide for patient protection by limiting the number of mandatory overtime hours a nurse may be required to work in certain providers of services to which payments are made under the Medicare Program.
- ✓ **H.R.1295 , Diabetic Foot Amputation Prevention Act**, would provide for coverage of diabetic foot sore apparatus as items of durable medical equipment under the Medicare Program.
- ✓ **H.R.810, Medicare Regulatory and Contracting Reform Act of 2003**, would provide regulatory relief and contracting flexibility under the Medicare Program.
- ✓ **H.R.1125, Medicare Access to Rehabilitation Services Act of 2003**, would repeal the Medicare outpatient rehabilitation therapy caps. This bill was incorporated into the larger

Medicare bill passed by Congress this year and the therapy caps were lifted.

- ✓ **H.R.1902, Medicare Vision Rehabilitation Services Act of 2003**, would improve outpatient vision services under part B of the Medicare Program.
- ✓ **H.R.3355, Nursing Home Staffing Act of 2003**, would establish minimum requirements for nurse staffing in nursing facilities receiving payments under the Medicare or Medicaid Program.

REFORMING HMOS

When Congress passed the Balanced Budget Act in 1997 to give seniors more healthcare choices, they created the Medicare+Choice Program. Today, six years later, Nassau seniors are facing numerous problems with their Medicare coverage: increasing premiums, HMO pullouts from Nassau, and few choices. Congresswoman McCarthy is trying to fix the problems Nassau seniors endure through their enrollment in Medicare+Choice by contacting those involved from other branches of the government, and by cosponsoring several pieces of legislation.

- ✓ **H.R.368, Medicare+Choice Equity and Access Act of 2003**, would provide for equitable reimbursement rates under the Medicare Program to Medicare+Choice organizations.

DEFEATING CANCER, PROTECTING PATIENTS AND RECOGNIZING SURVIVORS

Congresswoman McCarthy is a strong advocate for breast cancer prevention and treatment since the number of women diagnosed with breast cancer on Long Island is among the highest in the country. Furthermore, women on Long Island with breast cancer pay an average of 116% more for the five breast cancer drugs than drug companies' most favored customers, and 80% of women diagnosed with breast cancer are over the age of 55.

H.R.896, the Breast Cancer Prescription Drug Fairness Act, is Congresswoman McCarthy's bill to reduce prescription drug prices for women diagnosed with breast cancer, along with seniors on Medicare.

- ✓ **H.CON.RES.348**, recognizes the survivors of cervical cancer and the importance of good cervical health, preventing HPV infection, and detecting cervical cancer during its earliest stages.
- ✓ **H.R.1657, Annie Fox Act**, would provide funding for programs at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences regarding breast cancer in younger women, and for other purposes.
- ✓ **H.R.1692, Taxpayers' Cancer Research Funding Act of 2003**, would establish and provide a check off for a Breast and Prostate Cancer Research Fund, and for other purposes.
- ✓ **H.R.1746, Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act of 2003**, would authorize the Director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to make grants for the development and operation of research centers regarding environmental factors that may be

related to the etiology of breast cancer.

- ✓ **H.R.1448, Women's Cancer Recovery Act of 2003**, would require that health plans provide coverage for a minimum hospital stay for mastectomies and lymph node dissection for the treatment of breast cancer and coverage for secondary consultations.
- ✓ **H.R.1288, Access to Cancer Therapies Act of 2003**, would provide for coverage under the Medicare Program of all oral anticancer drugs.
- ✓ **H.R.1241, Better Screening Test for Women Act**, would authorize additional appropriations to the National Institutes of Health for research on the early detection of and the reduction of mortality rates attributed to breast cancer.
- ✓ **H.R.1886, Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act of 2003**, would amend the Public Health Service Act and Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to require that group and individual health insurance coverage and group health plans provide coverage for a minimum hospital stay for mastectomies and lymph node dissections performed for the treatment of breast cancer.
- ✓ **H.R.817, Assure Access to Mammography Act of 2003**, would provide for enhanced reimbursement under the Medicare Program for screening and diagnostic mammography services.
- ✓ **H.R.918, Patient Navigator, Outreach, and Chronic Disease Prevention Act of 2003**, would authorize the Health Resources and Services Administration, the National Cancer Institute, and the Indian Health Service to make grants for model programs to provide to individuals of health disparity populations prevention, early detection, treatment, and appropriate follow-up care services for cancer and chronic diseases, and to make grants regarding patient navigators to assist individuals of health disparity populations in receiving such services.
- ✓ **H.R.1422, Colon Cancer Screen for Life Act of 2003**, would amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve patient access to, and utilization of, the colorectal cancer screening benefit under the Medicare Program.
- ✓ **H.R.3362, Cancer Screening Coverage Act of 2003**, would require that group and individual health insurance coverage and group health plans provide coverage of screening for breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer.
- ✓ **H.R.3438, Gynecologic Cancer Education and Awareness Act of 2003**, would provide for programs to increase the awareness and knowledge of women and health care providers with respect to gynecologic cancers.

PROTECTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Congresswoman McCarthy understands the concerns women have regarding their health, and she knows our children require special care. That is why she's working with her colleagues on a number of bills that directly address women's and children's healthcare needs.

H.R. 894, the Diamond Blackfan Anemia Act, is Congresswoman McCarthy's legislation to increase research on a rare genetic bone marrow failure disorder, which develops in infancy, with 10% being severely anemic at birth and 90% by the first 12 months.

H.CON.RES.314 is Congresswoman McCarthy's legislation that expresses the Sense of Congress regarding women with bleeding disorders. This legislation is part of a larger project to raise awareness of this highly undiagnosed women's disease.

- ✓ **H.R.852, Environmental Health Research Act of 2003**, would authorize the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to develop multidisciplinary research centers regarding women's health and disease prevention and conduct and coordinate a research program on hormone disruption.
- ✓ **H.R.2727, Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage Act of 2003**, would require equitable coverage of prescription contraceptive drugs and devices, and contraceptive services under health plans.

RELIEVING THE NURSING SHORTAGE

H.R.934, the Teacher and Nurse Support Act of 2003, is Congresswoman McCarthy's bill that would amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to expand the loan forgiveness and loan cancellation programs for teachers, to provide loan forgiveness and loan cancellation programs for nurses, and for other purposes.

- ✓ **H.R.920 , Recruitment and Diversity in Nursing Act of 2003**, would amend the Public Health Service Act to promote careers in nursing and diversity in the nursing workforce.
- ✓ **H.RES.313** Commemorates the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the United States Cadet Nurse Corps and voicing the appreciation of the House of Representatives regarding the service of the members of the United States Cadet Nurse Corps during World War II.

ENSURING QUALITY HEALTH CARE

Congresswoman McCarthy recognizes the need for healthcare reform, and continuous groundbreaking research to provide cures and new treatments for diseases. McCarthy is working to

ensure that patients receive the care they need and deserve.

- ✓ **H.R.956, Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993**, would amend the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to allow employees to take, as additional leave, parental involvement leave to participate in or attend their children's and grandchildren's educational and extracurricular activities and to clarify that leave may be taken for routine medical needs and to assist elderly relatives, and for other purposes.
- ✓ **H.R.943, Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act**, would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit against income tax for the purchase of hearing aids.
- ✓ **H.CON.RES.30** Expresses the sense of the Congress regarding scleroderma.
- ✓ **H.R.290, Inflammatory Bowel Disease Act**, would expand research regarding inflammatory bowel disease, and for other purposes.
- ✓ **H.R.296, Treatment of Children's Deformities Act of 2003**, amends the Public Health Service Act, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require that group and individual health insurance coverage and group health plans provide coverage for treatment of a minor child's congenital or developmental deformity or disorder due to trauma, infection, tumor, or disease.
- ✓ **H.R.328, Access to Hospitals Act of 2003**, would extend modifications to DSH allotments provided under the Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP Benefits Improvement and Protection Act of 2000.
- ✓ **H.R.716, Improved Nutrition and Physical Activity Act** or IMPACT Act, would establish grants to provide health services for improved nutrition, increased physical activity, obesity prevention, and for other purposes.
- ✓ **H.R.1068, Pancreatic Islet Cell Transplantation Act of 2003**, To increase the supply of pancreatic islet cells for research, to provide better coordination of Federal efforts and information on islet cell transplantation, to collect the data necessary to move islet cell transplantation from an experimental procedure to a standard therapy, and to provide for a demonstration project on Medicare coverage of pancreatic islet cell transplantation for beneficiaries with type 1 diabetes who have end-stage renal disease.
- ✓ **H.R.1214, Consumer Assurance of Radiologic Excellence Act**, would provide public access to quality medical imaging procedures and radiation therapy procedures.
- ✓ **H.R.1381, Living Organ Donor Job Security Act of 2003**, would amend the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 and title 5, United States Code, to allow leave for individuals who provide living organ donations.
- ✓ **H.R.1430, Family and Medical Leave Inclusion Act**, amends the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to permit leave to care for a domestic partner, parent-in-law, adult child, sibling, or

grandparent if the domestic partner, parent-in-law, adult child, sibling, or grandparent has a serious health condition, and for other purposes.

- ✓ **H.R.1910, Genetic Nondiscrimination in Health Insurance and Employment Act**, would prohibit discrimination on the basis of genetic information with respect to health insurance.
- ✓ **H.R.1322, Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act of 2003**, would provide emergency protection for retiree health benefits.
- ✓ **H.R.2157, Uterine Fibroid Research and Education Act of 2003**, would provide for uterine fibroid research and education.
- ✓ **H.R.3203, Diabetic Foot Complication and Lower Extremity Amputation Reduction Act of 2003**, would authorize grants for education, screening, and treatment with the goal of preventing diabetic foot complications and lower extremity amputations.

PROVIDING EQUAL COVERAGE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

- ✓ **H.CON.RES.292** : Expresses the sense of Congress that Congress should adopt and implement the goals and recommendations provided by the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health through legislation or other appropriate action to help ensure affordable, accessible, and high quality mental health care for all Americans.
- ✓ **H.R.953, Senator Paul Wellstone Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act of 2003**, would provide for equal coverage of mental health benefits with respect to health insurance coverage unless comparable limitations are imposed on medical and surgical benefits.

PROTECTING HEALTH COVERAGE FOR OUR MILITARY

- ✓ **H.R.58, the Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act**, would restore health care coverage to retired members of the uniform services
- ✓ **H.R.1231** would allow Federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and to allow a deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums.
- ✓ **H.R.476, United States Cadet Nurse Corps Equity Act of 2003**, would provide that service of the members of the organization known as the United States Cadet Nurse Corps during World War II constituted active military service for purposes of laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
- ✓ **H.R.1466, Mobilized Reserve Family Health Care Act of 2003**, would reduce the health insurance costs for family coverage of military reservists called to active duty.
- ✓ **H.R.2998, the Injured Soldiers Hospital bill**, would provide permanent authority for the exemption for certain members of the uniformed services from an otherwise-applicable

requirement for the payment of subsistence charges while hospitalized.

